

**Exeter-West Greenwich      February 17, 2009**

**Regional School District**

## **Minutes**

### **EWG School Committee Special Meeting**

**The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District held a Special Meeting on this date in the Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present: Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Greg Coutcher, Clerk; Bob Bollengier; Mark Rafanelli; Valerie Zuercher; Mary Walsh. Others present: Tom Geismar, Superintendent; Robert Ross; Attorney Brad Gorham.**

#### **A. SPECIAL MEETING Called to Order: 6:05 p.m.**

**1. Chair DeSack described a plan to provide funding based upon apportioning additional funds by population.**

**2. Various members of the audience commented on the proposal.**

- Ted Nataly, Exeter, asked who is advocating for Exeter. Member Walsh said she represents the regional school District.**

- Wayne Cross, Exeter, said that he is confused about what is changing. Chair DeSack explained the proposed plan.**

- Larry Aker, Exeter, spoke to the history of the apportionment on Exeter. He said that Exeter has paid more over the years. Chair**

**DeSack said the calculation is based on population. West Greenwich still pays \$1 million. This is not an attempt to get to 50/50. This plan can help the District survive 30-50. Mr. Aker said upon review of the figures it looks like Exeter will pay \$400,000 more and West Greenwich \$400,000 less than under the current charter.**

- Mr. Cross asked what the language would be for a charter change under this plan. Attorney Gorham said that the language would state that the increase would be portioned by student population as of October 1st. The change could be implemented in many ways such as a Referendum, at the District Financial Meeting, at the Town Financial Meetings, or through legislative action. Attorney Gorham said that there have been several charter amendments done by the legislature. It is up to the School Committee to decide which way to amend.**

- Paul McFadden, Exeter, said that there are use taxes and tangible tax. This is a use tax. The tangible tax is based on the net worth of each town. West Greenwich has a much greater ability to raise money. Exeter has had to cut the elderly tax freeze. Exeter has had to cut and make cutbacks. Exeter had a solution to 30-50 - to go to the Auditor General to ask for relief . Seats on the School Committee are not at large.**

**3. Chair DeSack asked Mr. Ross to put up a spreadsheet showing what 30-50 does to the District over time.**

**4. Member Walsh asked Attorney Gorham if the proposal requires a charter change. Attorney Gorham responded that it does need a**

**change.**

**5. Mr. Nataly asked if the plan is to not allow the people to amend the budget.**

**6. Member Bollengier asked if the law requires at least level funding. Attorney Gorham said that the schools must be funded at least at the level of the previous year. Attorney Gorham said there are two questions – Which proposal does the School Committee wish to move forward with? And how do you want to get the charter approved?**

**7. Chair DeSack asked Attorney Gorham if the proposition could be presented at the District Financial Meeting. Attorney Gorham said it can be if approved by the legislature.**

**8. Member Walsh asked if it could be done for this year. Attorney Gorham said that special town financial meetings could be done this year. A referendum probable couldn't be done to effect next year.**

**9. Chair DeSack asked, "If the District wanted to level fund, would it require a charter change?" Attorney Gorham said that the Committee would have to follow the charter.**

**10. Member Rafanelli asked what would happen if there is no amendment? Chair DeSack said that the District would get no**

additional funds. West Greenwich would pay. And next year the District could get less.

11. Member Zuercher said that the School Committee needs to show the damage that no change would cause. Bob Ross explained that the proposal does not take either town over the cap.

12. Member Zuercher once again said that the Committee needs to show how the District is effected by the 30-50.

13. Attorney Gorham said it would be advisable to determine tonight how to proceed.

14. Member Zuercher said that she wants to see the effect of 30-50 for five years.

15. John D. , audience member, said that he has heard about the disproportionate funding, however, he hasn't heard about cuts. Chair DeSack said that the Committee has recommended \$1.4 million in cuts, opening contracts, etc.

16. Wayne Cross asked if the federal stimulus will negate the need for a change. Chair DeSack said that the School Committee still needs to cut another \$500,000 out of the budget.

17. Member Bollengier said that the amount of money from the

**stimulus is not much.**

**18. Mr. McFadden asked why West Greenwich cannot go to the Attorney General to ask for relief from 30-50. Chair DeSack said that it isn't about the towns, it is about maintaining the schools. The School Committees' job is to manage the District with respect for the communities.**

**19. Member Rafanelli said that this can bring the communities together.**

**20. The amount of funding required by each town will be the base from the prior year adding the increase by applying the percentage of students in each town. The amount of funding required by each town shall be based upon the prior year's allocation. Any increase over the prior year's base shall be apportioned based upon the percentage of students from each town as of October 1st.**

**21. Clerk Coutcher said he favors a 50/50 split.**

**22. Member Bollengier asked if it isn't unfair to tax each town equally when they supply disproportionate numbers of students?**

**23. Member Walsh said she agrees with Clerk Coutcher but doesn't think it will be approved by votes.**

**24. Clerk Coutcher said that he doesn't think either town will approve this proposal.**

**Member Bollengier proposed a motion to ask counsel to present language to change the formula to apply the formula to the increase not the aggregate. Seconded by Member Rafanelli.**

**Attorney Gorham read the follow motion:**

**SECTION 1. Paragraph (D) entitled "Apportionment of construction and operating costs." of Section VI of Chapter 80 of the Public Laws of 1965 which established the Exeter- West Greenwich Regional School District is hereby amended to read as follows:**

**Construction and operating costs of the regional school district for each fiscal year shall be apportioned to the member towns of the district as follows: to the amount apportioned to each town for the prior year shall be added a percentage of the increase in the budget of the district based on the town's pupil enrollment on October 1 of the prior year.**

**In the event that there are no cost increases in any fiscal year or there are cost decreases, apportionment shall be on the basis of pupil enrollment on October 1 of the prior year.**

**Motion carried 5 – 1. Clerk Coutcher voted no.**

**25. The next step is to bring the School Committee and Town Councils together to discuss steps going forward.**

**26. A member of the audience said a vote to propose change to the charter requires all members be present.**

**Member Bollengier moved to adjourn. Seconded by Member Walsh.**

**Voted 6 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.**

**Thomas Geismar, Superintendent**